

Update : 2017-12-09 08:30:50
 Annisul Huq — Let the Legacy Continue
 Abdul Mannan



The sad untimely demise of the Mayor of Dhaka North Annisul Huq reminds of the politician, writer and journalist late Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury. Not many people of the current generation would have heard of his name or his deeds. Born in Feni in 1906 Habibullah Bahar had his education in Chittagong and Calcutta. He was a good sportsman who played for Calcutta Mohammedan Sporting Club and took active part in politics. Bahar was a prominent student leader of his time, later to join the Provincial Muslim League. Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly and was close to Mahatma Gandhi. Once Pakistan was created in 1947 he became the Provincial Health Minister in Nurul Amin's cabinet. Leaving aside all his political achievements what made Habibullah Bahar immortal was his successful campaign to eradicate mosquito from Dhaka city (then a provincial capital town). In his days Dhaka's boundary did not extend beyond Nawabpur Rail crossing (Bongobazar) but Dhaka (then Dacca) became unliveable due to mosquito menace. The city had a Municipality but its function was limited to cleaning the Dhaka's service toilets, maintaining the street lights and dispensing some primary health care to the city dwellers. As the city did not have much of paved roads and little vehicular traffic maintenance of roads was not a big issue. Because of mosquito menace malaria became common and because of Habibullah Bahar's active and vigorous campaign soon Dhaka became a mosquito free city. Overnight Habibullah Bahar became a household name not only in Dhaka but throughout the province. Since Habibullah Bahar no Health Minister could perform such a miracle. He left behind a legacy. Dhaka North's late Mayor Annisul Huq is no Habibullah Bahar but what he performed in a short period as Mayor of the northern part of one of the most chaotic city in the region will make his memories long lasting amongst the inhabitants of Dhaka. Annisul Huq came from a middle class family and had his university education in Chittagong University. His father Shariful Huq once served as a District Ansar Adjutant in Chittagong and those who remembers him found him from his student days to be a perfect gentleman, soft spoken and caring. Annis was never interested in politics and after completing his university education took up a job at the pioneer export oriented garments factory of the country. Annis was a quick learner and soon began his own business. He was one of the new generation entrepreneurs with multidimensional talents. He conducted creative TV entertainment shows with

perfection and soon was able to win the hearts of the viewers. Annisul Huq demonstrated his ability as a leader when he became the President of BGMEA and FBCCI. He knew how to negotiate and was loved by his employees, colleagues and peers. His talents did not go unnoticed and when Sk. Hasina, the Prime Minister of the country and the President of Awami League picked him to run in the North Dhaka City Corporation mayor election in 2015 she picked the right person to run the election. Annis had a clean image, was humble, demonstrated his quality of leadership and as successful businessman had vision. He won the election against a very strong candidate fielded by BNP and soon realised the challenges that lay ahead. In Dhaka the average people do not have much respect for civic norms and etiquettes. The traffic system is non-functional; sidewalks are occupied by street side vendors. Busy roads are easily transformed into parking lots. Land grabbers not having anything to grab anymore began to grab public drains, canals and parks and all possible available open spaces. Water logging made city dwellers life miserable. Before Annis became the Mayor he declared that once he won the election he will do everything possible to make people's life in the North Dhaka as comfortable as possible. As he climbed the social ladder slowly and steadily Annis knew the pulse of the people around him. He knew it would not serve any purpose if he merely became an armchair mayor. He needed to communicate with people, know about what they desired and find ways how to fulfil their desire. Once he took office he began to walk the streets of his constituency, see for himself what it would take to make life liveable and how he could deliver them. In Tejgaon and Gabtoly the truck drivers were in charge and they controlled the public roads. He talked with them, requested them to clear the roads. When they refused he took the help of the law enforcing agencies and forced the truck drivers clear the public roads for public use. In the process the drivers practically took him hostage for about two hours, but he was determined. After Annis's death the truck drivers have already made a comeback. In the Gulshan and Baridhara Diplomatic enclave many embassies unlawfully occupied the pavements in the name of security. He convinced them there are better ways how security may be ensued but occupying pavements may not be the best option. They voluntarily cleared the pavements and made it available to the pedestrians. Pavements were widened and reconstructed with better materials. Annis made a courageous decision when he declared only designated and clearly marked busses and rickshaws would serve the people in the Gulshan Banani area. Many raised eyebrows but his plan soon was put into action. People were relieved and could avail public transport easily. The most difficult task was to free the public drains and canals from the encroachers and grabbers and free the citizens from water logging. He began the task with full vigour but could not complete. He had plans to create more green space but before he could execute his plans he left us for good. Annis went to London to be with his son and his family and spend some time with his grandchild. Unfortunately he suffered a very complicated brain haemorrhage and succumbed on 30 November in a London Hospital leaving thousands to mourn his untimely demise back home. The list of things that Annis wanted to do is long and whoever steps in his shoes will find it a big challenge to continue the legacy that Annis left behind. Late Annis was a man of modern outlook and lived a comfortable life but was a common people's man. People are not immortal and neither was Annis but his deeds will make him immortal. The Janaza of Annisul Huq will be remembered by the people of the country not only for the huge participation by cross section of people but also because of emotion that ran across the common people of Dhaka. To match Annis's legacy political parties must find candidates to run the election who will be able to create a better legacy of Annisul Huq. The late Mayor did not live in an ivory tower he created a standard. The next elected mayor just will have to build on the standard Annisul Huq left behind. What is disturbing is a section of the media has already started promoting candidates for the Dhaka North mayoral election and most of the names which are promoted do not even qualify to come close to Annisul Huq's legacy. When Sk. Hasina picked Annisul Huq to run the mayoral election she made the right decision. People expect her decision this time will also be pragmatic and whoever is fielded as the candidate will have a clean image and a wider acceptance amongst the people of the constituency. Dhaka is in dire need of someone like late Habibullah Bahar Chowdhury or Annisul Huq. Let the inhabitants of this capital city have what they desire and deserve. Long live the deeds of late Annisul Huq! The writer is a commentator and an analyst

[Print](#)